657 The Local Government Councillor presumed the Administration
423 wanted people to stay in the village. He said that he would prefer
182 to live on his block but would not move as he might be gaoled for
361 doing so.[1] He had ordered two men from Ombi who started building houses on their blocks to stay in the village.

Administration officers said there was no longer an official policy on where people should live, but that individual officers had different ideas on the matter. As this is the source of much of the misunderstanding an official statement of policy through the Local Government Council may be helpful. Over half the people replied to the question 'where would you prefer to live - in the village or on the blocks?' by saying that whichever the government wanted they would do.

It has been said that conversion leads people to settle on their blocks, thus encouraging the breakdown of the village and lessening the attractions of village life for the younger generation, causing them to 'drift' to the towns. Several people, however, including one man who had intended going to Rabaul, mentioned that they preferred growing cash crops at Ombi-Tara to working for wages now that conversion has been introduced. It seems possible, therefore, that conversion may help to increase the attractiveness of the village rather than decrease it.

Social organisation

657 The land tenure system lies at the heart of social organisation
423 and 'may actually define the social and economic status of indivi-
182 duals in an agrarian economy' like that of Papua-New Guinea (Parsons 1963:4). Any alteration in the tenure system is bound to have far-reaching social implications.

Social changes occurring at Ombi-Tara are related not only to tenure conversion but also to the wider adaptation which occurs when a subsistence society comes into contact with the market economy. Some traditional practices are abandoned, as the initiation ceremonies, the taro festivals and multi-village feasts have

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[689] [1] The idea that a person may be gaoled for moving out of his village seems to come from observing other people in the area being gaoled under Native Regulation 101 (Native Regulations 1939 of the Territory of Papua as amended). This Regulation empowers the magistrate to declare any isolated group of less than three houses a 'Forbidden Settlement' and to direct the native inhabitants 'to remove to a regular village or villages within their district within a time to be specified by him'. Failure to comply with such an order carries a fine of not more than $2 or imprisonment for up to two months.

571 against sickness, crop failure and other catastrophes. The mutual
[602] obligation system which operates among kinsmen 'acts as a man's
[182] trade union, his friendly or benefit society, his slate club and his orphanage; it takes the place for him of health insurance, and if needs be provides for his funeral' (Lawrence 1964:34).

121 If it is hoped to set up individual farmers independent of their kinsmen some substitute must be found for the traditional method of social insurance. For as Fisk (1961:777) has pointed out, 'in an underdeveloped country...ready and prompt access to assistance in time of need is a variable of considerable importance to the settler'. Attempts to break down traditional obligation patterns by individualisation of tenure have often met with little success. In Egypt (see Gadalla 1962:80) and in various parts of the Pacific (Crocombe 1964b:127 and 1965:15) land registration schemes designed to result in individual tenure have failed to achieve individual ownership and use of land.

476 There are indications that traditional obligation patterns may
571 be continuing at Ombi-Tara since tenure conversion was introduced.
178 Blocks were cleared by kin groups in accordance with custom. Two
●[689] men mentioned that there had been an arrangement whereby if a person worked on the block of another man but the second man did not reciprocate, he would have to pay the first man 80 cents. However, both people said that no one had had to pay it. Two men who were working for wages on road maintenance near Ombi village bought food from the nearby store for those who helped clear their blocks. Five people claimed that they had helped clear other people's blocks but had not received any assistance in return. Everyone who was questioned said that no new obligations had been established by the process of clearing but this may be open to question.

423 It has already been mentioned that conversion involved substan-
657 tial redistribution and equalisation of right holdings. Whether obligation to the 'donors' will be established as a result is a matter for future observation.

The blocks of three of the four absentee blockholders were being cleared and planted by kinsmen. The block of the fourth absentee had not been cleared at the time of our stay. It is likely that some obligations will be established by this assistance.

Two families are living in houses constructed on the block of another man; and several people have cocoa, coffee or bush rubber trees growing on blocks held by other people. These situations are discussed on p.29 below. A 1

The Ombi man who moved to his block to protect his taro from the sorcery of another villager replanted some of his taro on the block of a kinsman, for further protection. This was the only reported case of a person planting crops on the block of another

A [See Category 425--Analyst]